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SUBJECT: EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: THE NEW DELEGATION
FOR RELATIONS WITH THE U.S.

REF: BRUSSELS 1075

Sensitive but Unclassified - please handle accordingly.

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: The new EP Delegation for Relations with the U.S. (U.S. Delegation) was designated on September 16 in Strasbourg. It is the largest EP delegation with 53 members and is in charge of developing relations with the U.S. Congress. For the first time in nearly 20 years the delegation will not be led by a British member. Elmar Brok, a senior German MEP from the European Peoples' Party (EPP) and the delegation's new Chairman, will have the task working within the framework of the Transatlantic Legislator's Dialogue (TLD) to continue to enhance cooperation across the Atlantic. The EP will also soon open its own office on the Hill, to improve communication channels between MEPs and Congressmen. END SUMMARY.

ROLE AND COMPETENCES

¶2. (U) The Delegation for Relations with the U.S. (U.S. Delegation) is charged with developing relations with the U.S. Congress within the framework of the Transatlantic Legislative Dialogue (TLD). This includes bi-annual meetings between the European Parliament and the U.S. Congressional delegations (once a year in the U.S. and once a year in the EU) as well as a series of videoconferences organized on specific topics of mutual concern. A Steering Committee, currently co-chaired by Rep. Shelley Berkley (D-NV) and Chairman Brok coordinates these TLD activities.

¶3. (U) Furthermore, the U.S. Delegation, as designated within the framework of the TLD, is an official advisor to the Transatlantic Economic Council (TEC). The TEC is a political body created at the April 2007 U.S.-EU Summit to oversee and accelerate government-to-government cooperation with the aim of advancing economic integration between the European Union and the United States.

CHAIR LEAVES BRITISH HANDS

¶4. (SBU) The Chairman for the next two and a half years (or "half-term") will be Elmar Brok, a respected senior MEP from the main center-right EPP group and former chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee (reftel). This is a significant change in leadership because the U.S. Delegation has been chaired by UK MEPs since 1989. Staffers from the delegation told us informally that they view this as a positive change, since Brok, as a very senior and well-respected MEP, will be able to move the delegation away from what they termed "British turf." (Note. As Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman, Brok proved himself a committed transatlanticist. He repeatedly pushed for increased ties between the Foreign Affairs Committee and the U.S. delegation and has attended many meetings of the TLD. End Note.)

15. (SBU) The delegation grew in both size and strength during the last parliamentary term and proved to be a useful tool for transatlantic dialogue. The delegation's last Chairman, Jonathan Evans, a former head of the British Conservatives in the EP, re-activated the TLD by organizing popular videoconferences on subjects such as financial services and climate change. Evans also revitalized the bi-annual consultations by inviting MEPs to attend who were not necessarily members of the U.S. Delegation but who were experts on the specific issues that were discussed. He also involved the committees in the delegation's work and asked each committee in the EP to designate one "key staffer" acting as a link with the delegation. Evans's predecessor, James Nicholson (UK, EPP,) had also obtained a special authorization to hold the meeting taking place in Europe in the capital of the EU presidency. The opportunity to visit capitals other than Brussels proved to be an effective incentive for members of congress to participate more actively.

6. (SBU) The Secretary General of the EP, Klaus Welle told us on September 23 that a green light has been given to the opening of an EP office in Washington, staffed by two full-time positions and distinct from the existing Commission delegation. That office will be an additional communication channel between the EP and Congress and will facilitate the future work of the U.S. delegation.

KEY MEMBERS OF THE DELEGATION

17. (SBU) Below are brief descriptions of several notable members of the delegation:

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-- Sarah Ludford (UK, ALDE): elected first vice-chairwoman, she was a vocal opponent of the Bush administration's war against terrorism. She is a strong advocate of data privacy and a strong opponent of the PNR and SWIFT agreement. A member of the previous delegation, she embarrassed some other members when, during one of the TLD trips, she told the press that Colin Powell was "the only person that was not completely mad in the U.S. government."

-- Niki Tzavela: (Greece, EFD): elected second vice-chairwoman, she is a new member of the small, very right and euroskeptic EFD group. She said during her presentation that she had studied in the U.S., including in the Harvard Kennedy School and had been active for 25 years in big companies in the private sector.

-- Hans-Gert Poettering (Germany, EPP): former EP President, he is a substitute in the delegation. It is not certain however that he will be very active in the delegation.

-- Rachida Dati (France, EPP): a controversial and iconic political figure in France, Dati comes from modest Algerian origins. She was chosen by President Sarkozy to be Minister of Justice in 2007 but was pressured to quit the government in 2009 and run for the European elections. We are expecting her to be a low-profile MEP as she already announced her intentions to run in the French municipal elections.

--Karl-Heinz Florenz (Germany, EPP): former chairman of the Environment Committee and drafter of the EP report on climate change.

--Anneli Jaatteenmaki (Finland, ALDE): former Finnish Prime Minister, Jaatteenmaki resigned in 2003 under pressure over the accusation that she had lied to Parliament and the public over how she had acquired confidential Foreign Ministry documents which she used during the election campaign. These documents contained diplomatic information from a meeting between President Georges W. Bush and Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen about Finland's position regarding the Iraq war. She was cleared of charges in 2004.

--Hannes Swoboda (Austria, S&D): an MEP since 1996, he is a Vice-Chairman of the socialist group and is considered as socialist Chairman Martin Schulz's "right arm." He has been, and will remain, an active member of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

--Jeanine Hennis Plasschaert (The Netherlands, ALDE): she is the ALDE coordinator in the Civil Liberties Committee and is a specialist in immigration, asylum and border control issues.

-- Peter Skinner (UK, S&D): a member of the previous delegation, he is known as "Mister Financial Services".

-- Stavros Lambrinidis (Greece, S&D): currently an EP Vice-President, Lambrinidis is a lawyer with experience in U.S. law firms who is very interested in transatlantic relations. An EP Vice-President, he was in the last term an active member of the Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs committee, very critical of treatment of EU data (SWIFT/PNR) by U.S. law enforcement agencies.

-- Jacqueline Foster (UK, ECR): started her career as flight attendant and then owner of a aviation consultancy company. She is very active on transport and aviation issues.

-- Catherine Trautmann (France, PES): a former French Culture Minister in the socialist Jospin government, Catherine Trautmann has been in charge of the important report on the telecom package in the last legislature.

-- Wolfgang Kreissl-Dorfler (Germany, S&D): also a member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Kreissl-Dorfler was a very active and critical MEP in the temporary committee on CIA flights and renditions.

-- Claude Turmes (Luxembourg, Green): a specialist in climate change and energy policy, he is also the Secretary of "Friends of the Earth Europe."

-- Sir Robert Atkins (UK, ECR): a senior British conservative MEP who has held many ministerial posts in the past, Atkins is a self-described "friend of the U.S". He told us he is very happy to be in the delegation as his son is currently working for Burston-Marsteller in Washington DC.

-- Peter Stastny (Slovakia, EPP): former professional ice hockey player in the North American National Hockey League (NHL) from 1980-1995, he is currently the General Manager of the Slovak national ice hockey team. He is also the leader of the Slovak

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delegation in the EPP group.

-- Zbigniew Ziobro (Poland, ECR): from the conservative Law and Justice party (PiS) of Polish President Kaczynski. Although a controversial figure in Poland, Ziobro was a high vote getter in his native Krakow. He served as Minister of Justice in the 2005-2007 PiS government and was known for his brash style.

MURRAY